

A Just Transition

An AEPF Framework Paper of the Food Sovereignty and Natural Resource Justice cluster

1. Towards a just transition in food, agriculture, and natural resources

- A global consensus exists on the need to transition to a post-fossil fuel future in light of the overwhelming evidence of human-induced climate change manifest in global warming, extreme weather events, catastrophic biodiversity loss, and natural resource degradation [Ref a number of key scientific studies e.g. of IPCC, IAASTD, etc.] The term just transition is often used to describe what this transition should be, but it can mean different things to different people, so this paper is a starting point to define what it is and how we can attain it. [can add a box on definitions of Just Transition, including history of concept]
- We must radically shift our model of food production and natural resource use and management to achieve a just transition [BOX on the contribution of industrial agriculture towards global GHG emissions and destructive effects of large-scale commercial mining, logging, and mineral extraction]
- There can be no just transition that is not based on the principles of food sovereignty, economic democracy, and post-extractivism [brief elaboration of these key concepts]
- Across the world, peasants, pastoralists, fishers, trade unionists and indigenous peoples are leading the way, showing how a just transition can be put into practice. Many of these groups are mobilising in the form of national and transnational social movements in a call for systemic change [Ref AEPF declaration and other key social movement political declarations]
- These social movements need to be supported by public policies and investments as part of a people-led process of development and change

2. Challenges and obstacles in achieving a just transition

- In order to achieve a just transition, we need to understand better the challenges and obstacles confronting us. To do this, we need to map the different actors - their interests, motivations, strategies, coalitions, and support groups - as well as the political and economic drivers that seek to block/hinder/co-opt such a transition.
- We can identify a number of major challenges and obstacles. These include:
 - a) Neoliberal policies around food, land, and natural resource use
- These policies have become hegemonic as a result of neoliberal economic globalization resulting in the transformation of food production systems from small-scale, diverse, environmentally adapted and culturally appropriate forms towards large-scale, intensive, labour shedding and environmentally harmful forms.
- These policies are manifest in the roll out of free trade agreements, the increasing financialisation of land and territories, resource grabs, the destruction of livelihoods and the expulsion of people from rural areas.
- Suggestions for boxes to illustrate these points:

- The impacts of the EU's EBA and sugar trade in Cambodia
- Impacts of food dumping, especially in the milk/dairy sector, on producers in India
- Land grabbing and land concentration in Europe
- b) Shrinking democratic space and rising authoritarian populism
 - Across both Asia and Europe, we are witnessing the shrinking of democratic space, the rise of authoritarian populism, and right-wing nationalism in countries such as the Philippines, India, Cambodia, Thailand, Lao PDR, Hungary, Poland, Ukraine and Turkey.
 - These political tendencies have implications in terms of rising repression, violence, and an atmosphere of intimidation and silencing for the population as a whole, and for environmental and human rights defenders in particular.
 - Include statistics and/or testimonies from these countries to illustrate points
- c) Top-down development paradigms
 - The imposition of top-down development paradigms overrides the wishes of local communities, privileges elites and deal brokers, and often contains an urban bias. This can find expression in the form of mega-infrastructure projects, tourism, real-estate, and other investment projects. The common denominator is that they do not adhere to principles of democratic decision making such as requirements for transparency, due diligence, public consultation; free, prior and informed consent; prior, independent impact assessments etc.
 - Suggestions for boxes:
 - China's Belt and Road Initiative
 - Campaign against Rosa Montana gold mine in Romania
 - Mobilizations against Jakarta Bay sea port in Indonesia
- d) False solutions: co-option of the just transition framework
 - In response to political, consumer, and social pressure – as well as the incentive to expand and commodify ever more areas of natural life – governments and private companies have sought to advance a number of false solutions. While these may superficially appear to engage with the just transition paradigm, these market-based solutions rest on problematic assumptions about exponential growth while leaving structural inequalities and the inherent environmental irrationality of the current development model untouched.
 - Examples include policies related to increased extraction for 'green energy', green capitalism, carbon trading, biodiversity off-setting, genetic engineering, digital agriculture, climate-smart agriculture, bioenergy etc.
 - Suggestions for examples/boxes?

3. Opportunities and pathways towards a just transition

- The opportunities and pathways towards a just transition are diverse in different contexts and rely on the balance of social and political forces in each region. A number of unifying themes can be identified based on the principles of peasant agroecology, food sovereignty, and energy democracy. These include, inter alia:

a) Transformative practices

- These transformative practices prefigure a different food and energy system. These practices need to be based on principles of justice, equity and redistribution, and as such must be based in dismantling corporate power.
- Examples include: movement for natural farming in Pakistan, agroecology, fossil fuel divestment campaigns [Annoyingly from extractives perspective, best examples are in Latin America, and to a lesser extent Africa!]

b) Territorial approaches

- These run counter to the centralizing and homogenizing trend of neoliberal globalization and show a different way forward in terms of decision-making power and flows of goods and capital.
- Examples include:
 - Food relocalisation strategies such as community supported agriculture and community supported fisheries, local food policy councils, municipal food movement etc.
 - Territorial markets across local, regional, national boundaries

c) Recentring human rights

- Advances which have been made to respect, protect and fulfill human rights have at times been made subservient to trade and investment priorities. Human rights instruments and legislation, as well as states obligations to uphold them, must take centre ground.
- This includes important normative instruments such as the CFS Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests, the FAO Small-Scale Fisheries Guidelines, and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [elaborate with examples on how these instruments can be used in concrete struggles]
- The recently adopted UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants (UNDROP) marks an important milestone in recognizing the importance of peasants and other people working in rural areas. Steps must now be taken to ensure its implementation. Box on UNDROP.

4. Lines of advocacy/recommendations/policy demands towards ASEM governments + roadmap for implementation

- Refer to AEPF12 Declaration
- Major area of work to be discussed at next AEPF meeting